

Common differences: Youth research in Europe. An Analysis based on published English and Spanish journal articles*

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Abstract

This article proposes to give a comparative overview of European youth research findings, focussing on the current youth-specific discourse among researchers in Europe. The aim is to demonstrate whether there is a uniform perception of youth, or at least a point of view shared by the various countries, and whether, furthermore, the research perspectives of the European Union correspond in respective countries. The comparative overview will include countries of the European Union. The analysis is based on selected English language periodicals and on Spanish publications relating to youth in specialised journals. The following limitations have to be borne in mind. No judgements or evaluations are made concerning the state of youth research in individual countries. Nor do we claim to classify empirical youth research in Europe¹. The range of publications relating to European youth research is far broader and more extensive than the selection of periodicals we have taken into account. Our investigation of these periodicals is meant to give a representative illustration of the main topics of youth research in Europe.

Key words: Youth; youth research in Germany, Spain and Europe; survey research; distinctive regional parameters; subjective problems; conditions by social surroundings.

Resumen. *Diferencias comunes: la investigación sobre juventud en Europa. Un análisis basado en artículos publicados en revistas de habla inglesa y española*

Este artículo propone brindar un panorama comparativo de la investigación sobre juventud en Europa, concentrándose en el discurso específico sobre juventud corriente entre los investigadores europeos. El propósito es demostrar si existe una percepción uniforme de la juventud, o al menos un punto de vista compartido en varios países, y si, además, las

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1. Other publications have this aim, and have been coordinated by the Deutsches Jugendinstitut. German Youth Institute 2002, CYRCE 1999, International perspectives towards youth and childhood.

perspectivas de investigación de la Unión Europea hallan correspondencia en los respectivos países. El panorama comparativo incluirá a países de la Unión Europea. El análisis se basa en publicaciones periódicas en lengua inglesa y en publicaciones españolas referidas al tema juventud. Se deben tener en cuenta las siguientes restricciones. No se realizan aquí juicios o evaluaciones concernientes al estado de la investigación sobre juventud en países individuales. Tampoco pretendemos clasificar la investigación empírica en esta materia en Europa. El rango de las publicaciones del ámbito de la investigación sobre juventud en Europa es mucho más amplio y extensivo que la selección de publicaciones periódicas que hemos tomado en cuenta aquí. Nuestra investigación de estas publicaciones pretende brindar una imagen representativa de los principales tópicos de la investigación sobre juventud en Europa.

Palabras clave: Juventud; investigación sobre juventud en Alemania, España y Europa; investigación por *surveys*; parámetros regionales distintivos; problemas subjetivos; condiciones por contextos sociales.

Summary

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1. How to interpret the state of youth research in European countries

It is worth distinguishing between «Youth research in Europe» and «European youth research». European youth research prefers to follow programs launched by the EU, and research institutions involved are inevitably controlled by them. Thus, European youth research necessarily has a conceptual orientation. However, the more we immerse ourselves in youth research in Europe, the more facets appear in the spectrum of youth-related research itself. In the following, we will focus our attention on youth research in Europe and on European youth research. Here we have chosen to refer to articles published in three English journals, *Young, Youth and Adolescence* and *Youth Studies* and a selection of Spanish journals. In Spain, we can see a wide range of topics as well as a relative independence vis-a-vis the much larger English publication market.

When youth researchers from Germany examine the activities of other countries, they do it against the background of the tradition of youth research

in Germany. We will briefly describe the perspective of youth research in Germany, as it might affect our paper. Youth research in Germany has a clear institutional basis; the situation is not comparable in all European countries. Part of the institutional framework for thinking about young people in Germany is provided by legislation aimed at helping children and the young, alongside which there is the youth work supported and developed at local, association and political levels. The «Children and Youth Report issued by the Federal Government» gives a continuous overview of the situation of young people in Germany. In each parliamentary term the Federal Government has to produce and to present such a report to the parliament. The latest available report is the twelfth in the series (Bundesministerium, 2005), the 13th report is on its way and will be published by begin of 2009.

Part of the institutional basis is the German Youth Institute (Deutsches Jugendinstitut, DJI). For more than 40 years, the DJI (German Youth Institute) has functioned as a central research organization². The appearance of regular large-scale surveys of the situation of young people is a further sign of the continuing interest of society in its youth. Particularly noteworthy are the «Shell-Jugendstudie» —the latest to appear is number 15— and the «Jugendsurvey» (youth survey) of the DJI, three of which have been published. The journal *Diskurs*³, published until 2005 at the DJI, functions as an interface between youth research and the education of students at university. Apart from these publications, there are youth-related contributions in sociological and pedagogical journals. At present, the demand for youth research is being stimulated by the Pisa Study, which has diagnosed certain deficiencies in the German educational system, and by anxieties over the excessive use of computer and internet. Further central topics are the problems that arise during the transition from school to labour market and the political participation and integration of young people.

2. European Youth Research – EU Youth Research

When comparing existing examinations of youth research, we can first observe great disparities between them. This is not really surprising, as regional peculiarities bring about region-specific views and ways of dealing with topics. The central question is whether we can identify genuine youth research or should rather speak of a kind of specific research into young people's problems or the problems that society has with its young people.

2. With an annual budget of 15 million Euros, practice-related as well as theoretical, conceptual projects have been realized and surveys done in the research fields of childhood, youth and families.
3. *Zeitschrift für Sozialisation und Erziehung* (Journal for Socialization and Education), *Zeitschrift für Erziehung* (Journal for Education), *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* (Journal for Pedagogics).

2.1. *The context of EU youth research – parallels with youth research in Germany*

There are images of youth in society and these images influence the way in which young people are perceived. Changes in the image of youth are important for youth research as well as for society. There are different research questions and types of methodologies realized in European countries. European research initiated by European authorities wants to improve acceptance of the EU by young people. Therefore the needs of young people are central for the research.

The need of youth research to discuss its own contradictions can be brought into sharp focus with the formulas of «youth as a problem» and «youth in problems». Only where research contributions at the EU-level are concerned, is there a clear definition of the problems. It reminds us of the type of youth research prevailing in the 1970s. *Youth research in the 70s*, at least in Germany, clearly considered its task to be that of discovering and making known the needs and problems of young people. With this intention studies carried out on this basis were regarded as scientific findings, but they were also a demand for politics to youth-related policies (youth in problems). From the perspective of «youth as a problem», the aim was to integrate young people into society. And the youth protest *in the 1980s* showed clearly that young people's integration into society was necessary. This stimulated the search for appropriate scientific methods to describe the situation of young people in the modern world. Gudmundsson argues analogously in his retrospective of youth research in Scandinavian countries⁴.

Thus, there is a demand for youth research to take into account criteria from inside the scientific community and, at the same time, to be application-oriented. To satisfy these requirements, a reference system including science as well as child and youth welfare and their specialized associations and institutions is necessary. In consequence, youth research has to face current questions and uncertainties of political perception. Because of these requirements, great store is set on scientific backup. The current reference systems use common, temporarily valid, publicly circulating images of youth. These systems are politics, the social sciences and practice-oriented professionals. This scientific approach implies not only a survey of the situation of young people but also a revision of publicly shared images of youth. In the last resort, the term «youth» must be applied in a more differentiated manner. This development becomes apparent in the 80s as more accurate distinctions are made between young people. We notice that growing up takes place under varied regional, social, economic, cultural and ethnic conditions. Thus, youth research has been obliged to define and redefine its object. Youth research reacts in two ways. On the one hand, it relies on the realization of large surveys. On the other, a greater differentiation of research can be observed. This differentiation is apparent in new

4. See Gudmundsson, 2006 p. 83.

research topics such as transition research⁵ (from school to the labour market), youth culture, media and new technologies, spatial relations, youth and politics. Research turned its attention to youth culture, the media and new technologies because the everyday lives of young people had been profoundly shaped by music and images (TV). As a rule, technical artefacts (radio, mp3-player) play a prominent role in this context, thus influencing the process by which young people find their identities⁶. If new technologies and media influence professional, private and social life, then the cultural dimension of everyday life is necessarily affected at the same time. Young users deal with gadgets on an everyday basis (see Tully, 2003, 2006, 2008 on technical socialization). These gadgets are an important element of communication among friends and particularly of arranging common activities. They belong to the culture of everyday life. Spatial relations and mobility are another well researched field, since separation and reintegration require space and motion⁷.

Youth and politics are the main topics of survey research. Empirical research on the topics of youth and youth culture is essential to the understanding of changes in the everyday lives of adolescents. Youth-cultural developments reflect patterns in ways of life. According to the sociological concept of reflexive modernity, these problems have proved to be essentially gender-specific. Youth-cultural affiliations and the practices connected with them are experienced in different spatial and social environments and milieus and with or without a background of migration. Regional (old and new «Länder» = federal states), structural and spatial aspects (urban/rural) also play their part in this context. Opportunities of interaction and communication and skills in this area play a central role here. The ability to express oneself, language and social competencies are an important prerequisite for the social habitus where the successful social and professional integration of boys and girls is concerned. The topics listed (transition problems, media, youth culture and the heterogeneous life circumstances of young people) play an important part *in the reference system of politics* (youth welfare and the general public), social *science and practice*. The interaction of social science, politics and social practice indicates nowadays a certain need for information, counselling and mediation.

These changes in the general conditions of youth research have an influence on its topics and content, but also lead to a splitting up of youth research into individual, largely self-contained research fields. On the basis of our analysis of published youth research we can identify the following six areas:

5. Transition research deals with problems arising when young people have to manage the transition from school to the system of vocational training (first threshold) and from the system of vocational training to an occupational system (second threshold).
6. The technical, cultural, symbolic and subjective dimensions of the term «media» belong together: The media are neither exclusively a technical means of dissemination, nor are they exclusively «a construction of reality».
7. See Tully, 2002; O'Connor, 2005; Rastas, 2005; Strandbu, 2005; Baeck, 2004; Rygaard, 2003; Thulin/Vilhelmson, 2007; Urry, 2004; Hunecke/Kemming, Tully, 2003.

- (1) risks in the everyday lives of young people,
- (2) political attitudes and participation,
- (3) social perspectives of youth,
- (4) everyday life of young people (mobility, media, leisure time),
- (5) youth culture,
- (6) social classes and taking possession of space⁸.

The six areas mentioned above are exemplified by the following topics and surveys (1) *Investigations* of the lives of young people are carried out at *the level of individuals as well as that of society*⁹. (2) The intensity and breadth of political participation among young people have been investigated in an international survey. 7430 persons (aged 13-18) have been interviewed/questioned (Rose-Krasnor *et al.*, 2006). (3) The *social perspective of young people* and their expectations are surveyed in several studies. This area includes research with respect to biographical and personal perspectives. (4) The Data on Youth in Spain¹⁰ 2006 is a good example of an *investigation into the everyday lives* of young people. (5) *Youth is a perceived stage of life*. In the survey entitled «Forever Young? Young People's Conception of Adulthood», 3200 persons aged 16-29 were questioned about their concepts of adulthood (Westberg, 2004)¹¹. (6) The *transition from school to work* is one of the main subjects in several investigations in Europe. In Sweden a large sample (based on persons born between 1969 and 1973) was investigated with respect to the long-term effects on young adults of one or two years of unemployment (Franzen, Kassman, 2005). In another international study, official data were reviewed in a secondary analysis. The role of youth and the transition to adulthood has been investigated from the perspective of biographical research (Bynner, 2005).

8. Young people often seem to avoid moving and, instead, accept longer journey to the workplace (see Friedel *et al.*, 2003; also Alix, Cesh, 2002).
9. There are analyses for example of eating disorders and self concepts (Kans *et al.*, 2003). The survey was conducted in the Netherlands; 5.287 girls, aged 12-13; 14-16 and 17-19 were interviewed. The relation between emotional disturbance and delinquency has also been investigated. In a survey into the long-term (Overbeek *et al.*, 2001) of such disturbance (1302 young people aged between 12-24 (in four groups: 12-14, 15-17, 18-20, 20-24)) were interviewed in the Netherlands. A study on vulnerability with respect to mental health was conducted in 2003 (Kraaij *et al.*, 2003).
10. In Spain 1433 young people aged from 15 to 29 were investigated. Another Spanish survey, called *Young People in the Information Society and their Families* can be quoted in this connection (for further information see footnote 13 to 16).
11. Relevant aspects here are partnership and family and taking responsibility. Late adolescence and antisocial behavior, drug use, peer orientation were focused in an investigation of 908 persons between 17 and 20. The ties of young people to their parents, the educational methods of parents, drug use and antisocial behaviour in late youth have been investigated in an international survey (Claes *et al.*, 2005). Lapses of style, personality development and social exclusion have been investigated at national level in Great Britain (age 12-13, 16-17) (Croghan *et al.*, 2006). 1354 persons were questioned with respect to their personal development and to some factors influencing the development and to of modes of expression.

2.2. *EU youth research*

The splitting up of research fields mentioned above can also be observed at the level of European youth research. The concern at the European level is to give an account of living conditions in individual member states of the EU. In particular, we consider young people's expectations with regard to Europe, their acceptance of the European community and its institutions, the alignment of institutional parameters among countries, but also direct exchanges (studies, work, internships, youth exchange programs, participation in politics). Furthermore, various packages of measures for young people are conceived, implemented and evaluated.

2.2.1. *European Youth Report 2001*

This report on the situation of young people in Europe focuses on the following four dimensions: (a) the life circumstances and values of young people; (b) youth policies in the European countries involved; (c) the education, further education and qualification of youth work staff; (d) the analysis of data and empirical findings as a basis for recommending future youth policies in Europe. On the whole, empirical data on the situation of young people in Europe show that a large majority of them are embedded in their regional surroundings and the national perspectives, customs and lifestyles of those surroundings. With regard to the attitudes of young people towards Europe, large geographical differences can be noticed, so that we speak of a North-South divide. Young people from North and Central European countries share critical-to-sceptical opinions on the significance of the EU, whereas young people in Southern Europe and in Ireland have a positive attitude.

These differences are reflected in attitudes towards spatial mobility. According to the report, the willingness to be mobile depends on foreign language skills, experience of travel, and an interest in spending time abroad. What we find is that young people from Northern Europe, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany often have these foreign language skills. This is not always the case in England and in Southern European countries is quite different. The number of young people there who speak only their native language is much larger. Many young English people, for example, expect anyone with a different mother tongue to be able to communicate in English, whereas they themselves do not feel any need to learn foreign languages.

2.2.2. *Comparative studies – an important type of European youth research*

A main concern of the research initiated by the EU is to achieve comparability. Essentially, we can see two conceptual approaches. First, the EU promotes parallel research that is carried out analogously in various member states. Second, the EU's aim is it to deliver a description of the everyday life of young people in European countries.

1) The project Youth-Package of Alpine Awareness (part of Interreg II) can serve as an example. The purpose of this project was to promote and examine

young people's sensitivity towards environmental matters related to mobility. With the participation of various European regions (Bavaria in Germany; Southern Tyrol, Friul, Aosta, Belluno in Italy; Rhône-Alpes in France), comparable research dimensions are developed and become a basis for the project.

Such projects achieve to promote a sensitivity for shared and differing problems by means of comparative studies. Among other things, this leads to formulas and dimensions of common research. An example of a large European youth study is Euyoupart (Wächter, 2005); this was carried out by a research team from eight member states (Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Italy, Austria, Slovakia and Great Britain). A total of 8030 youths from 15 to 25 years of age were interviewed face-to-face in the eight participating countries. The researchers had to achieve a scientific comparability of data in spite of uneven participation and different research traditions in the contributing countries, and also faced the problem of translating individual concepts into different languages and political cultures. According to this study, a large part of European youth has no interest in politics. But a large majority of young people think that going to elections is the most effective way of participating in politics, and a comparatively high percentage takes advantage of the right to vote, even though they have little trust in political parties.

This type of parallel comparative studies, realizing projects in the same way in various EU countries (see Ros, Rodríguez, 2003), deals mainly with the social effects of modernization. At issue are politically relevant fields, significant for an understanding of common European identity. This is equally true for the project YoYo, carried out in various European countries such as Spain, Germany etc. and devoted especially to problems of transition from school to the labour market in different European regions (see Du Bois-Reymond, 2004, p. 135-163; López Blasco *et al.*, 2003; Pohl *et al.*, 2006, p. 183-200). In this context, Bendit (2006) reminds us of the demographic development and increasing disparities. He also points to inter-gender and inter-generational problems of transition. Other components of modernization in Europe are the prolonged period of education and the delayed transition from the school system to an occupation (see Bendit, 2006, p. 51ff.)

2) There is also the type of comparative youth study which attempts to describe the situation of young people in Europe. European statistics function here as an empirical database. In addition, European research networks serve to develop instruments for further youth research (see Bendit, 2006, p. 66f.). As for the empirical, youth-relevant database, five elements can be named: the «European Community Households Panel Survey» (Bendit, Gaiser, Marbach, 1999), the «European Labour Force Survey», the «European Social Survey», the «Eurobarometer 47.2: The Young Europeans» and the «European Value Survey» (see Bendit, 2006, p. 67). As Bendit explains, the possibilities for making comparisons are limited, even though progress is clearly discernible from the research activities already being documented. The same instruments are not always applied, as would be desirable in quantitative as well as in qualita-

tive research. Nevertheless, a contribution is being made to prepare for further joint research by identifying such methodological obstacles. «Comparability and equivalence are key concepts regarding cross-cultural comparative research. Of course the level of comparability and equivalence depend on the type and purpose of the respective study. As we have seen before, all phases of comparative investigation can be affected by methodological problems and endanger comparability. Most of the times, it is assumed that there are high levels of comparability between different social and cultural contexts» (Bendit, 2006, 72).

3. Youth research, variety of topics and new risks in growing up – youth research publications in European countries

The remarks below will illustrate the publications of youth research in Europe. First of all, we shall consider the field of English-language publications introducing the important journals *Young*, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* as well as *Journal of Youth Studies* and some of their contributions. After that, we shall turn to youth research in Spain.

What is conspicuous about English-language publications is their wide range of topics. New topics of youth discourse in European countries are taken up: e.g. migration, health, vulnerability. There is a noticeable interval between the social debate of these topics in individual countries and their scientific treatment, but this is caused by the structural «filter function» of specialist publications. The institutional and thematic, sometimes even personnel-related connections between youth research and those who represent it in the public and media discussion of youth in individual countries emphasize its influence, but also its dependencies. The relevance and credibility of the findings of youth research are based on its ability to translate society's questions and problems into serious investigations. At the same time, this social and increasingly public and media discourse on youth leads to expectations and preferences with regard to the issues that youth research has to confront. Between these poles —on the one hand, the pressure of social, political and media expectations, and on the other, scientific rules as well as already existing scientific findings and knowledge basis concerning the youth phase— some kind of mediation and balance has to be achieved. The results of youth research, therefore, require mediation and translation efforts to a high degree. Socially generated images of youth must be constantly «modernized» in view of the changes in Central European societies as a whole and the special challenges for young people as students, vocational trainees and migrants who, as actors and at the same time affected parties, deal with these social changes.

3.1. English-language contributions from «*Young*», and «*Youth and Adolescence*» and «*Youth Studies*»

English-language publications come primarily from authors in Scandinavian and English-speaking countries. Spanish authors are hardly to be found in

English journals, or English authors in Spanish journals. The Spanish-speaking publications are relatively autonomous and are oriented towards readers in Spain but also in Latin America¹². The political, social and cultural differences between Northern and Southern Europe are manifest in the examined publications on youth research. In Northern Europe, there are English-language professional journals giving a platform for comprehensive international discussions to youth researchers from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Holland, England, and sometimes from the German-speaking area. With a few exceptions, the Southern European countries are hardly represented here¹³. The Southern European area lacks comparable international publications. In the Southern European countries of Spain and Italy, there are a number of publications and networks in which youth research, professional associations and professional practice exchange information on research findings, relevant (international) activities, current youth topics and social work procedures. It is mainly in Italy that regional projects and experiences are considered the most important issues. Youth research in these countries has a strong regional perspective.

3.1.1. Young

The journal *Young* resulted from the initiative of Scandinavian researchers who wanted to have a platform for publishing youth topics. It is now (2008) in its 18th year of publication. *Young* has developed into a mouthpiece of European youth research. This can be seen from the fact that contributions now come not only from Scandinavian countries but also from France, the USA, Great Britain,

Table 1. Main thematic emphases in *Young*

| Category | Number |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Various | 9 |
| Social situation and possession of space | 21 |
| Social perspective on youth | 18 |
| Everyday lives of young people (leisure, media, mobility) | 10 |
| Risks in the everyday lives of young people | 24 |
| Political attitudes and participation | 8 |
| Youth culture | 17 |
| Total | 107 |

Base: 2000-2006.

12. On this topic see for example Pérez Islas, 2006. Another example is the journal *Revista Iberoamericana de Ciencia Tecnología y Sociedad - CTS*, which functions as a cooperation between the University of Salamanca (Spain), the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) and Centro Redes (Argentina). The office of CTS is located in Buenos Aires.
13. In the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, there are two contributions from Italy, one each from Spain and Portugal; in the *Journal of Youth Studies*, there are no contributions from these countries.

Table 2. Social problems brought up in *Young*

| Topics | Number |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Various | 4 |
| Education | 11 |
| Gender | 13 |
| Family | 10 |
| Migration/ethnicity | 16 |
| Metastudies | 17 |
| Risks (drugs, health, delinquency) | 18 |
| Work (transition school-occupation) | 12 |
| New technologies or communication media/ mobility | 10 |
| Cultural values (partnerships, religion, sexuality) | 13 |
| Politics and participation | 6 |
| Total (multiple entries) | 130 |

Base: 2000-2006.

Germany and the new EU countries. The journal accepts a wide range of topics and the contributions reach a very high standard. A large number of articles in the last five years have dealt with risks in the everyday lives of young people (health, delinquency, drugs), the social situation and taking possession of space as well as youth culture. The tables below (table 1 and table 2) give relevant information on all these aspects.

There is no clear trend in articles published between 2000 and 2006 dealing with the social problems of young people. «Youth in problems» is a frequent object of research (drugs, health, delinquency), as are studies on the everyday lives of young people. Gender topics and «transition», i.e. moving on from school to an occupation, are also important fields of research and publication. Cultural values stand out, as do metastudies on the situation of youth and topics such as education, gender, family.

The development away from a professional journal for northern countries is evident from the essays published between 2000 and 2006. Less than a third of contributions still come from the Scandinavian countries. For a similar number, the country of origin cannot clearly be identified, slightly less than a third come from European countries and fewer than 10% were written in non-European countries.

3.1.2. *The two professional journals* Journal of Youth and Adolescence and Journal of Youth Studies

From the issues of both periodicals between 2001 and 2006, we considered 42 articles from *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* and 76 from *Journal of Youth Studies*. In these contributions (from the countries mentioned above), there

Table 3. Main thematic emphases from the point of view of youth sociology in *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* and *Journal of Youth Studies*

| Category | <i>Journal of Youth and Adolescence</i> | <i>Journal of Youth Studies</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Various | 2 | 2 |
| Social situation «and possession of space» | 3 | 19 |
| Social perspectives on youth | 7 | 19 |
| Everyday lives of young people (leisure, media, mobility) | 4 | 10 |
| Risks in the everyday lives of young people | 21 | 13 |
| Political attitudes and participation | 1 | 7 |
| Youth culture | 4 | 6 |
| Total | 42 | 76 |

Base: 2000-2005.

are relevant investigations of the topics: social situation, everyday lives of young people, youth culture and the risks of growing up.

(a) *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* – topics emphasized: *The Journal of Youth and Adolescence* is an important stage for sociological, psychological and pedagogical findings. In the period considered in our analysis (2001-2006), the articles came mainly from Northern Europe, the Netherlands and Great Britain. The focus is on certain aspects of the everyday life of young people, the alteration of youth as well as youth culture and the media. In the foreground of the contributions of both journals (see table 3), we find the investigation of risks in the everyday lives of young people. The socio-cultural transformation of the youth phase takes second place among research topics. Youth cultures and media as well as their connection to new possibilities of communicating with people of the same age are important.

Along with the topics of drugs and crime, that of health and health risks is treated more intensively in research. The issue of how one takes care of one's own body in everyday life is highlighted, topics of sports and fashion, but especially the studies on nutrition and risks of eating disorders have to be mentioned. Socially mediated patterns are taken into account as are the positive and negative conditions of growing up in a family and the immediate social surroundings.

Roughly two thirds of all contributions for the *Journal of Youth* (25 articles) come from North European countries and the Netherlands. The journal's focal points are the following three large topic fields: (1) *Growing up in families*: Scanning the journal, something might be surprising: Growing up in a family, the relationship between parents and growing children, tensions between close ties to parents and the process of separation and independence as well as

the effects of negative experiences within the family —all these are standard topics of youth research in Europe. (2) *Everyday lives of young people, development, people of the same age, identity*: in this field, standard topics of youth research are connected with: social and asocial behaviour of young people, the role of fashion and appearance, self-confidence and personal development as well as adolescents' sexual behaviour. (3) *Risky life circumstances, drugs, crime, health* as well as the influence of risky behaviour have effects on the quality of peer relationships.

Physical and emotional health has become a more important topic in youth research in the last few years. More attention is given to the following aspects: Signals and sometimes alarming findings of health research, health education in nursery schools, schools and educational counselling as well as psychotherapeutic work with children and adolescents. Empirical surveys dealing with eating disorders (bulimia, anorexia) of young people, emotional illnesses of depression and of how people cope with «critical life events», smoking and the relation between negative childhood experiences and vulnerability are the topics in at least 10 published articles.

(b) *Journal of Youth studies*: This professional journal focuses on the dissemination and discussion of representative results of youth studies. It is now (2008) published in the eleventh year. Beside the classical aspects of growing up and the changing social and cultural conditions of life, the journal takes into

Table 4. Social problems focussed on *Journal of Youth Studies* and *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*

| Thematic Groups | <i>Journal of Youth Studies</i> | <i>Journal of Youth and Adolescence</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Education | 2 | 2 |
| Gender | 3 | 3 |
| Family | 7 | 4 |
| Migration/ ethnicity | 2 | 3 |
| Metastudies, studies on youth in society | 13 | 4 |
| Risks (drugs, violence, health risks, crime and prison, etc.) | 17 | 19 |
| Transition school-occupation, work | 13 | - |
| New technologies and communication media | 1 | - |
| Values (e.g. religion, partnerships, sexuality) | 6 | 3 |
| Politics and participation | 6 | 2 |
| Unclassifiable entries | 6 | 2 |
| Total number | 76 | 42 |

Base: 2000-2005.

account the importance of social politics as a frame for the everyday life of young people.

More thematic emphasis from the point of view of youth sociology are risks in everyday life of young people. Besides drugs and criminality, health and risk of health are investigated more intensively. Part of this investigation are surveys with regard to one's own body (f.e. sport and fashion, but also investigations on nutrition and eating disorders (bulimia, anorexia).

Problems and changes in the youth phase are seen more strongly under a social perspective of society where young people live. What resources do young people need, here and now, for their own positive development, for their integration at school, in vocational training on the job and so on? Against this background, the various social, cultural and media aspects of young people's everyday lives are examined and put in the context of social, economic and cultural changes.

Undoubtedly, the survey data of youth studies have the advantage of making actual representative results available. How do young people in the various countries of Europe nowadays judge their lives in the family, their chances at school, how do they see their professional opportunities? Further thematic points of reference for the youth studies are higher requirements at school and in vocational training and, at the same time, the obvious way young people deal with the new media for learning and communicating. These studies deliver important data and findings with regard to the classical fields of youth research, which includes young people's participation in social, cultural and political contexts as an important resource for politics and society.

Surprisingly, the topic of migration and inter-ethnic coexistence is taken up comparatively rarely. Processes of personality development and success or failure, as well as the availability of style and taste were investigated in their relevance for social inclusion and exclusion. The focus of contributions analyzed here is on adolescents' personal well-being and health, maintaining them or proving to be vulnerable. Sexuality and dealing with experiences of violence as well as the topic of risky or non-risky approaches to one's own body belong here thematically, as does the question of how young people cope with crises, illnesses and failures.

3.2. Spanish youth research. Publications and available data

The following remarks are concerned with youth research in Spain. We will look at published papers and available surveys on youth. It is difficult to judge the products of a non-English-speaking area adequately from outside and to categorize them correctly. The authors would like to ask their colleagues from Spanish-speaking areas to excuse, but also to help us continue the scientific discourse.

Relevant research activities are carried out on a broad basis. In Spain, publications on youth are manifold and comprehensive. Spanish youth research is embedded and institutionally supported. The most important institute is

Table 5. Surveys on youth in Spain

| Survey | Study from | Number of interviews | Thematic orientation | Survey area | Population | Gender/age |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Data on youth in Spain ¹⁴ 2006 (first wave) | March 2005 | 1.433 | General study | national | representative | 15 - 29 |
| Youth ¹⁵ the Constitution and political culture | July 2003 | 2.005 attitudes | Political | national | representative | 15 - 29 |
| Young people in the information society and their families ¹⁶ | November 2002 | 1.918 | Data on media use and provision, family settings | national | People in locations with more than 50.000 inhabitants | Older than 15 |

the Instituto de la Juventud (INJUVE). INJUVE was founded by the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs and its relevant activities are producing surveys, specialist publications and materials to support local youth work. Injuve publishes for example *Revista de Estudios de Juventud*, but also commissions large surveys on youth. In the following, we will first introduce relevant surveys available from the Spanish-speaking area. Then we will give a synoptic account of publications.

3.2.1. Survey data – on the situation of young people in Spain

As regards the existing survey data, INJUVE has recently initiated several studies. (1) The *Informe Juventud en España* is produced periodically and contain information on family constellations, emancipation, economics, consumption, values, participation and the use of technology. It is the largest data report in Spain. The research was carried out in 2004 and the study published in 2005 5014 young people aged from 15 to 29 were interviewed. (2) Another collection of data available is *Juventud en Cifras*. It is also conducted by INJUVE, but carried out by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS). CIS is the central, autonomous research institution in Spain, financed by the Ministry of the Prime Minister. The findings of these studies are based on population data and give information on the family environment, partnerships, leisure, nutrition, autonomy, the economy, jobs, health and behaviour. (3) Another recent study treats youth in an information society and family relations. 1918

14. *Juventud en cifras*. <http://www.injuve.mtas.es/injuve/contenidos.type.action?type=1296440931&menuId=1296440931&mimenu=Estadisticas> [Access: 20.12.2006]

15. *Sondeo sobre la juventud española 2005 (primera Oleada)*. <<http://www.injuve.mtas.es/injuve/contenidos.type.action?type=157114324&menuId=157114324&mimenu=Observatorio%20de%20la%20Juventud%20en%20España>> [Access: 20.12.2006]

16. *Jóvenes, Constitución y cultura política*. vol. 7, July 2003.

young people aged 15 and older, both male and female, were interviewed in cities with more than 50 000 inhabitants. INJUVE is responsible for this national study as well. It is a comprehensive study¹⁷, which provides data on mobile communications technology and the use of computers in households (with or without Internet access).

The importance of large surveys is also noteworthy. Youth research is institutionally well embedded in Spain. The CIS (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas) guarantees social science at a high standard. It is a similar organization to DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft = German Research Foundation) in Germany.

3.2.2. Spanish specialist publications on the topic of youth

To gain an overview of the Spanish publications, journals with the title of *Juventud* as well as pedagogical journals and professional sociological youth journals were examined. The selection was limited to the years 2000 and later. All available issues up to the autumn of 2006 were considered. Essentially, we can define three groups.

1. Publications on youth in sociological journals. Up to one quarter of the articles we examined are related to youth topics. 26 of 103 articles appeared in such sociological journals.
2. Publications on the life circumstances of young people can be found in the well-known *Revista de Estudios de Juventud*. Among the topics dealt with are: young people's life in society, gender, migration, transition from school to occupation and health playing an important part (64 of 103 articles refer to these areas).
3. Another group of publications are the journals dealing with educational research, the history of education, psycho-social interventions, communication theory etc (13 of 103 articles could be found).

Of the published articles, approximately two thirds deal with the topic of young people and their life circumstances. They are strictly connected to youth research, which can be expected for a journal named *Revista de Estudios de Juventud* (magazine for studies on youth) with its specific topics. Less than 10 out of 100 articles focus on pedagogically, psychologically and anthropologically oriented topics (which is comparable to the German situation). What is striking is the high percentage of articles to be found in distinguished sociological journals (working with peer review procedures). This is a first indication of a stronger emphasis on the sociology of youth. In Germany, youth welfare, youth work and protection of minors are among the standard topics of youth research,

17. The number of people using e-mail at home was also recorded. In addition, a scale for political and religious attitudes was gained. Other data refer to family income depending on respective city districts, to the number of people in the household under the age of 14, and to the question of who looks after them after school.

Table 6. Thematic emphases of publications examined in Spain

| Categories | Number |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Various | 2 |
| «Social situation and possession of space» | 6 |
| View on youth | 9 |
| Everyday lives of young people (leisure, media, mobility) | 17 |
| Risks in the everyday lives of young people | 20 |
| Political attitudes and participation | 24 |
| Youth culture | 25 |
| Total | 103 |

* On the basis of examined publications in Spain 2000-2006.

whereas we assume that in Spain a more objective academic style can first be achieved in the post-Franco era. The analytical view on youth in Spain is modern and differentiated, which means constantly trying to include current problems with enormous complexity. This becomes clear with respect to contributions on Europe¹⁸. For Spain, we find two different types of analysis. There are articles that focus on comparisons with European countries, and there are others that deal with young people's relations to Europe. Beside those two types related to Europe, there are contributions dealing with the topic of youth in Spain itself. The percentage of publications with a distinct national reference is rather small. For nearly half of the contributions being examined, a reference to the regional investigation cannot be seen. Only five percent of publications refer explicitly to individual regions, which is surprising in view of the strict regionalization in Spain. Only from the outside does Spain appear to be a relatively homogeneous country, when in fact different languages (Basque, Catalan, Galician) are spoken besides Spanish¹⁹. These languages are used in research, for publications and in schools. References to space and to life circumstances are expressed as well in other dimensions, when the following aspects are investigated: «The social situation and the taking possession of space», mobility and communication and ethnicity are recognizable as main topics.

Political participation and youth culture play an outstanding part. But the use of the Internet, leisure time, computers and mobile communication also have a growing influence on the everyday of young people²⁰. About 10% of contributions focus on youth as a necessary individual stage of development.

18. See Ros, Rodríguez, 2003. The authors report on young people's European identity from a Spanish point of view. This article is based on a comparative study carried with similar instruments in other European countries.

19. Thus París et al., 2006 report in Catalan about a youth survey carried out in Catalonia.

20. See Lorente (2002), *Estudio de Juventud*, nº 57.

Table 7. Social problems focussed on Spanish-language publications

| Thematic groups | Number |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Education | 3 |
| Gender | 3 |
| Family | 4 |
| Migration/ethnicity | 8 |
| Metastudies, studies on youth in society | 9 |
| Risks (drugs, violence, health risks, crime and prison, etc.) | 9 |
| Transition from school to an occupation/work | 9 |
| New technologies and communication media, mobility | 10 |
| Values (e.g. religion, partnerships, sexuality) | 16 |
| Politics and participation | 20 |
| Without classifiable entries | 12 |
| Total number | 103 |

* On the basis of examined publications in Spain 2000-2006.

If we arrange the contributions according to regular thematic fields of social research, we learn that «Youth culture» and «Politics and political participation» are the most important topics, followed by the risks in the everyday life of young people and the use of media and technology in leisure time. The category of risk includes drugs, health and crime.

The share of contributions referring to political attitudes and participation is above average. Topics of investigation are, for instance, the contrast of youth and society, «a demonstration of solidarity with youth», youth and commitment, political socialization and communal participation, being young in «a dictatorship and democracy», the behaviour of young people at the polls, European identity and the significance of Europe for young people. The analysis of value orientations of young people play an important role in published articles as well. Topics here are youth and partnership in the new Europe, night life as a journey between youth and adulthood, youth in post-modern society as a challenge for pedagogics, at the other end, alternatives to the leisure time organization of young people. To what extent new technologies and communication structure the everyday lives of young people is a topic in 10 out of 103 articles. Articles on the transition from school to an occupation, risks in the everyday lives of young people, studies of youth in society as well as migration and ethnicity appear just as often. Migration and ethnicity are important in Spain because of the large number of migrants who live there. The risks of youth include the topics of drugs, the propensity to violence, but also health and the influence of sects on the young people.

As we can see, sociological research on youth in Spain is rich in facets and it represents also the common topics of young people's everyday lives. Special problems are addressed as they are encountered in Spain. It seems like the topic

of migration as well as the topic of transition from school to an occupation is relevant.

4. Conclusion: The interaction of perspectives

Public articles on youth research are filtered. On the one hand, there is an obstacle given by the language. As English is not the common language for the Spanish, the German, the Italian, the French, etc., it is evident that the translation to English means an additional requirement. So we found that, for example, the journal *Young* (during the years 2000 to 2006) published ten contributions from Great Britain, but only one from France. On the other hand, notable overall research interrelations are constituted by publishing articles in a common field. We have noticed that, in contrast to English-language publications, Spain with its just 40 million inhabitants has its own youth research activities, which are published in Spanish. We realize that in Spain the very large clientèle for Latin American research must be considered as well. Even if, occasionally, English contributions are published in Spanish journals and Spanish colleagues also publish in English, we are dealing here with two coexisting language systems. And in this way, each side cultivates its own client relations²¹.

Youth research in the countries examined reflects highly diverse problem fields, a broad spectrum of thematic and methodological means being available for dealing with the life circumstances of young people. Accordingly, empirical youth research is highly differentiated, which can be observed, in an exemplary way, in the following research types:

1. *Survey research*, from a socio-political perspective. This type of research is motivated by the interest in receiving representative data concerning the situation of young people as a social group in society.
2. The type of studies takes into account the fact that, for the description of youth, there are *distinctive regional parameters* and indicators defining the opportunities, challenges and limitations of young people who grow up in certain regions²².
3. The type of *youth research related to local* or individual sub-groups of young people tries to obtain a picture, as differentiated as possible, of young sub-groups by considering their existing subjective problems and the conditions that define their social surroundings.

21. Italy represents a special South European case. Italian research appears to concentrate more strongly on its own language area, which is obviously smaller than those of German, English or Spanish. There are projects initiated by the EU as well as projects focused on problems of youth in Italy. With respect to projects, initiated by the EU the intention is to get information on regions.

22. As far as we know, there are regions in Europe having a lot in common, for instance the region of the Alpes, share live circumstances although the countries are different.

The database we worked out gives an overview of realized surveys on the one hand and research topics as well as, public discussions of youth in Europe on the other hand, which means we give an insight into what youth in a modern world is. Obviously youth research depends on the attention of the society and the dissemination of youth images by the media. Youth research depends on the discussion of youth welfare and youth policies. To that extent, the public discourse on youth does not only depend on a published scientific discourse, but the public discourse creates a demand for youth research. Youth research itself delivers evaluations, develops differentiated images of youth and transports knowledge about youth in contexts of certain situations and locations. It is the public discourse preceding research that must be tracked down and identified. Nevertheless, the professional journals do not sufficiently represent the youth research carried out in the regions. Because of the linguistic obstacles mentioned above, very rigid rules established for the acceptance of articles produce, in effect, that only parts of youth research in Europe are noticed. So we have concurrent objectives: the one is to give a general view of youth in Europe and, at the same time to serve as a mirror of the way young people live in the regions of Europe. The publications on youth can never serve both objectives at the same time. Therefore, there will always be a need for the interchange between a more locally oriented type of research and a type of research that functions as a representative of a large community like Europe.

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